

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Gaston Skills Inc.

North Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Gaston Skills Becomes First North Carolina Rehabilitation Facility With ISO 9001:2000 Certification

Client Profile:

Gaston Skills Inc. in Gastonia, North Carolina, has provided employment and training opportunities for persons with disabilities in Gaston and Lincoln counties for more than 40 years. Housed in a former Lowes Hardware store, the facility provides services to at least 51 local businesses. With the assistance of staff, the 130 consumers, as the workers are called, provide various types of work, including inspection, assembly, packaging, sorting, collating, stapling, labeling, folding, bulk mailings, cutting and gluing.

Situation:

As government funding for state mental health services continues to decline, growing the fee-for-service business became crucial. The management of Gaston Skills decided to go for ISO 9001:2000 registration in order to attract more business, particularly from the automotive industry. They contacted the Industrial Extension Service (IES) at North Carolina State University, a NIST MEP network affiliate, about beginning the registration process.

Solution:

IES worked with Gaston Skills to implement the ISO 9001:2000 standards. With changes in management over the years, it took almost four years to reach that milestone. Gaston Skills successfully passed ISO 9001:2000 registration at the same time it was being reaccredited by CARF, the national organization responsible for accrediting rehabilitation training centers, and celebrating its 40th anniversary. "This positive momentum," said Rick Leissner, executive director, "should help them attract new business and should decrease their reliance on government funding." Gaston Skills became the first rehabilitation facility in North Carolina to become ISO 9001:2000 registered. Other facilities have successfully ISO 9001 registered departments within a facility, but Gaston Skills is the first entire facility to be registered.

Results:

- * Achieved ISO 9001:2000 certification.
- * Increased levels of production and outsourcing opportunities anticipated.
- * Recognized as first North Carolina rehabilitation facility to be ISO 9001 registered.

Testimonial:

"This will make us a better company. It should open more doors to higher levels of production and outsourcing opportunities. It should broaden our horizons for higher technical and automotive customers."

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Rick Leissner, Executive Director